

**Small Hands on Deck: A Garden Pavilion and its Children**

**An Honors Thesis (ARCH 402)**

**by**

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## Abstract

In the College of Architecture and Planning, there was an opportunity for a class of fourth year students to partake in a Design Build project in the Muncie area. The Maring-Hunt Public Library needed to expand outward and collaborate with local gardeners for the Gateway to Growing Pavilion. There was a large plot of land and only a few existing garden plots before our studio designed a master plan and built a shade-shelter pavilion for the gardeners. My specific involvement revolved around the children who had been or would in the future use the area. I researched other children's gardens and implemented some of their most successful concepts into my own design for that portion of the master plan. Even more valuable, though, was meeting with teachers, library staff members, parents, and especially children and learning of their wants and needs first-hand. I also, along with a small team in our section, designed and built a series of raised garden bed prototypes, the final design of which would be incorporated into the pavilion. The most important consideration for this master plan and completion of the first phase was designing for all people, not just targeting or benefitting a small group; this included young children, elderly, and those needing further accommodations.

## Acknowledgements

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## Table of Contents

Process Analysis Statement	Page 3
Appendix A: Literature Review	Page 9
Appendix B: Children's Garden Design	Page 11
Appendix C: Raised Garden Bed Design	Page 12
Appendix D: Process Photographs	Page 13
Works Cited	Page 18
Supplements	Attached CD
Digital Model	
Literature	
Process Drawings	
Process Photographs	

## Process Analysis Statement

In the city of Muncie, there are several projects calling out for student and community involvement. One such project arose from a desire of the Maring-Hunt Library to partner with its local gardeners to revitalize the adjacent gardens. Previously, the land was home to a football field and a track, which were vital to the community's historical culture. Before this Ball State University's Immersive Learning class embarked on the project, there were ten or so existing garden plots surrounded by a chain link fence. There were also several recently-planted trees, an old goal post, and a shed to house the gardeners' equipment. These were playfully referred to as "sacred cows" because it was so important to the community members to preserve those items. For the first few weeks of the semester, our group focused on researching existing pavilions and library expansions as precedents for our design. As the weeks continued, we developed a series of site plans then moved on to the final design, and toward the end of April, we had a fully-erect garden pavilion and a raised garden bed.

Initially, I chose to join the Immersive Learning course because I had worked on a design-build project with the professor last year, and I was anxious to work on something with such a concrete output. I have sat in school for many years, and it was great to get out on a jobsite again and work with my hands. However, even more importantly was the opportunity to engage with the community more than I had been able to in the past. I had the chance to meet with children of various ages, the parents of some of the children, and even staff persons at the library, and that is something so worthwhile that is rarely touched in traditional schooling. I have always loved children, so I was excited to view our project through the lenses of little eyes and hands. Even though the children-focused portion of the project will not be built until a later



phase, it was a great opportunity to look at the needs of the younger generation since that is not something on which classes usually emphasize.

Back in January, we began the research portion of our semester-long project, and I chose to focus on the expansion of library programming. Two important articles, "The Whole Story, the Whole Library: Storytelling as a Driving Force" and "Green Teen Programming," best assisted me in our search for success. I developed ten attributes the library should encourage among the younger generation: being crafty, being dreamers, being cognizant, being green, being educators, being wrong, being moved, being advocates, being astute, and being relevant. Encouraging young minds to be involved in their community is an unparalleled advantage, but it is also difficult to accomplish. Within the larger section, my first group set out to find concrete programming ideas for the Maring-Hunt Library to test on their young patrons. While the library already has some programs for young students, it can reach more people by expanding outdoors and collaborating with the local gardeners and Southview Elementary school.

The next phase of our project was creating several master plans for the site, and we regularly made changes and critiqued one another's to find the most successful plan. There were effective aspects to each person's design, and we then split off into four groups to hammer out the details again. This constant group changing was a great opportunity to hear from each member of our section. I worked with several other students on our iteration of the master site plan, and my contribution was a children's garden which would be used by different age groups at the library and elementary school. The existing garden is shaped in a rectangle, and my professor suggested a more playful shape for the children's garden. I chose to cut a circle in half and arrange the beds within so that each age level could have its own portion of the garden.

Also important was understanding the heights and physical abilities of children, so the raised beds are tiered according to average heights. The raised beds would also be accessible to any children with further physical needs.

To receive feedback from the stakeholders and community members, we hosted several events, open to all, at the library. We began by discussing our research and literature reviews with library staff persons to see first-hand what their wishes for the master plan were. We received wonderful feedback from that presentation, and the library staff persons were able to voice their concerns for some ideas and excitement for others. The most beneficial planning event, however, was a more casual presentation in which we invited all members of the neighborhood to voice their opinions. We placed our various design ideas on boards throughout the library's conference room, and people could place stickers on the ideas they liked most. Our groups spread ourselves out and explained the designs to each other. While the patrons seemed excited about most of the design ideas, they also were concerned with the safety, functionality, and upkeep of any structures we would put in place.

The team broke up into smaller groups for the final design and building stages, and I joined the group in charge of the landscape design and the first raised garden bed. Several students proposed an idea where there would be space beneath the bed where for a wheelchair to come under, but I thought it was more important to make a universally-accessible planter where gardeners could tend from the side, rather than sitting beneath. For the final design, however, we compromised on a bed that one could sit under or tend from the side since that would be easily accessed by anyone. We made three prototypes out of donated white wood to explore and test the three design ideas. This was incredibly beneficial to physically see the ideas



brought to life; we even asked someone to bring a wheelchair in to test the functionality of the raised beds.

Throughout the semester, I learned a great deal about the design build process. During the design-build project last semester, I was not as involved with the wood and screw construction methods as I was this year. One important lesson learned is that everything takes longer than planned for. In the digital world of designing and modeling, it is easy to quickly alter an idea, but in the real world it is much more difficult. Preparing the wood and taking measurements can be so imprecise due to many different factors, which is very different from digital modeling. Another insight was the importance of meeting with members of the community during the design process. As a student, I often think I know a lot, but there is so much to learn from people who use the space in which one is designing. I also learned something about myself: I love building! I learned the proper way to use electric power tools and how to plant herbs so they will grow successfully. I learned that I really enjoy working with my hands, so I am excited to be a part of future design-build projects.

Along the way, there were also many challenges and setbacks during the design-build process. Time management was an issue since the team members each had a different schedule; making times where we all could meet proved pretty difficult. Once we moved out of the design phase, building brought some challenges as well, especially the weather. We really could only work out on the site during the daytime, which is very different from the studio design culture. The biggest challenge was learning to collaborate with fourteen other people in both the designing and building phases. Each team member had his or her own ideas on what

was best, and it was difficult to compromise. Normally in school, projects are done individually, but this project required fifteen people to come to an agreement on every decision.

The Maring-Hunt Public Library Pavilion Project is important to the Thomas-Park-Avondale neighborhood because it offers a new amenity to its members. The master plan includes features suggested and supported by the people who came to the public meetings, and people can really get excited by the rejuvenation of a site with so much potential. The most important aspect of the project is getting children involved young so they can grow alongside the garden. Forming a group of first generation gardeners is an amazing concept, and the pavilion we designed and built will help the library do just that. With its programming expansions, the Maring-Hunt Library can inspire the youth to excite in the project. Some students have not had the same opportunities in life, so it is important to share what we have learned with them.

The next phases of the project will be completed by architecture students in the next few semesters, and I am excited to see what they accomplish in addition to what we have already designed and built. The second phase of the project is the Market Pavilion, which will be open to the public to share and sell the food they grow there in the garden. A small-scale farmers' market, this pavilion will further tie members of the community together. The third phase of the project will include the Education Pavilion and the corresponding children's gardens and play spaces. My proposal for the children's garden may or may not be strictly adhered to among the future classes, but they can use it as a basis for design. One can never stop designing, and it is possible future classes will consider things we overlooked for the original master plan. I am attending Ball State for graduate school in the fall, and I may have the opportunity to work on



this project again during the summer workshop next year. Regardless, I will have the skills I learned this semester for the rest of my life!

# Nature of Libraries

## *"Green Teen Programming"*

**Being Crafty** : Recycling is rarely considered a fun or exciting activity, but it definitely has the potential to be a point of focus for schools and public places such as libraries. Historically, libraries or places of **higher knowledge and resources**, but the new waves of inventions and procedures cannot be omitted. Teens who like to use their **hands** and get involved can turn to **upcycling** products and use their unlimited creativity to **spark new ideas**.

**Being Dreamers** : Teens are also at a great age for thinking and dreaming about the future. Libraries can reach out to those teens considering their careers and offer advice or even discussion panels to help them decide. "Green programming done by libraries can have a real-world reach, especially if you bring in green experts in your community to demonstrate, speak, or engage students on a topic." Some libraries even host career days, which would mean partnering with the local schools to get students involved.

# Nature of Libraries

## *"Green Teen Programming"*

**Being Cognizant** : Many adults do not take teens seriously, but trends of awareness are becoming increasingly popular. Climate change is something previous generations of teens were not so interested in, but this current generation is beginning to understand its importance. **Teens Turning Green** is a national movement of teens who want to get involved in bettering their future world. "Their Project Lunch is a local effort, which could be applied at other schools around the country bringing schools nutritious, local, organic, and unprocessed foods, as well as education."

**Being Green** : "Libraries can offer teens space to gather and toolkits for being **greener** at home. A seed garden is a great way to encourage students' green thumbs and offer them platforms for sharing and engaging with their communities.

**Being Educators** : Teens are at an advantage because younger children often idolize and mimic them. Teens are old enough to manage and facilitate their own organizations and programs, and with the help of local libraries, they have space and resources to reach out and share their **knowledge** with others. An example of this involvement is the student-led Jasper Sustainability Club in a school in Canada which performed an energy audit on their local library.



# TECHNOLOGY AND STORYTELLING

## *"The Whole Story, the Whole Library: Storytelling as a Driving Force"*

**Being Wrong:** Storytelling is not just for young children learning in preschool, but it can be a great platform for every age group to engage with others. Older teens and adults can learn more mature content through informal means of storytelling. "The new popularity of this traditional form is indicative not only of the human need to connect, but the human need for story. Youth services librarians have long spoken of the efficacy of storytelling; it's past time for librarians as a whole to do the same."

**Being Moved :** "People are not convinced by statistics and factoids; they are convinced by the stories that emotionally move them." Young children can be motivated to look at and learn from other cultures by being exposed to them early on; storytelling or reading is a great method to hook the interest of young students as well as older adults.

**Being Advocates :** Storytelling is taught in colleges of science for graduate schools. Storytelling, while crucial, should also be modified to fit current and future practices in order to be the most beneficial for the younger generations. "Every program or event presented in the library, whether executed by librarians or outside presenters, should promote not only the resources of the library but also a positive perception of the agency."

# TECHNOLOGY AND STORYTELLING

## *"The Whole Story, the Whole Library: Storytelling as a Driving Force"*

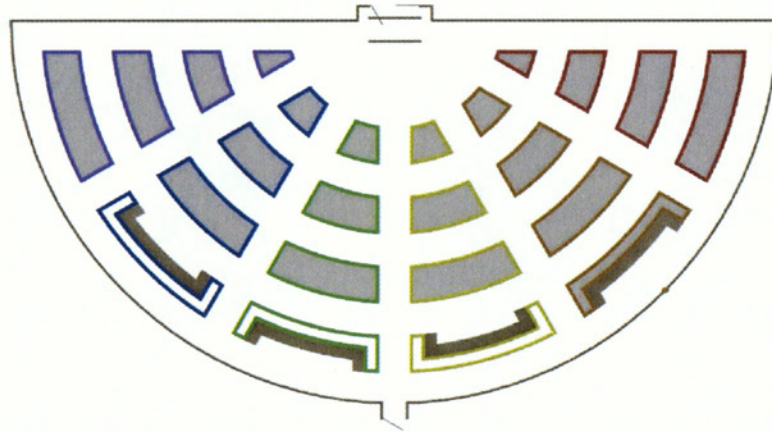
**Being Astute :** It is important for associates of libraries to be cognizant of the opportunities around it and create new opportunities for the next generations. "In all its permutations, from digital recordings to pre school story ties to annual reports, storytelling can be integrated not only into library programming but also into management, training, and marketing."

**Being Relevant :** "Recent research in neuroscience supports what librarian storytellers have known for decades: human beings are hard-wired for story, and respond to it at a visceral level." The young and old increase their literacy skills, expand vocabulary, and learn to be better listeners. Representatives who can tell their organizations' stories well can move "a community from apathy to advocacy."



## Appendix B: Children's Garden Design

Plan



Rendering





## Appendix C: Raised Garden Bed Design

A team member's and my proposal



The final design, constructed by the group





## Appendix D: Process Photographs

I was responsible for tilling and removing the dirt in the main circle (Photo by Lindsey Stoy)





The last three columns going up





I helped my group members cut up sod and remove it (Photo by Lindsey Stoy)





Our lesson on herb gardening for students (photo by Pam Harwood)



We sanded each piece before it was used for the raised garden bed (Photo by Lindsey Stoy)





The ribbon tearing ceremony on Opening Day



## Works Cited

Del Negro, Janice M. "The Whole Story, the Whole Library: Storytelling as a Driving Force." *ILA Reporter* (2015): 4-7. *Library Literature and Information Science* [EBSCO]. Web. 14 Jan. 2017.

Storytelling can be a driving force for the community. In her article, Janice Del Negro, well-known storyteller in Illinois, describes a brief history of public library programming in the United States. She claims that storytelling is incredibly fruitful for all generations. It is important for libraries to meet the modern world with acceptance and eagerness as technology changes.

Williams, Beth Filar. "Green Teen Programming." *Young Adult Library Sources* (2012): 29-31. *Library Literature and Information Science* [EBSCO]. Web. 15 Jan. 2017.

Beth Filar Williams, a professor at Oregon State University, claims teens are the forgotten generation in most libraries' programming. There is a huge opportunity for learning and involvement if libraries reach out directly to this demographic. She cites several school programs that have already begun green programming, targeted specifically at teens who can share their knowledge with both older and younger students.